

Ministry of Social Services



Annual Report for 2014-15

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Letters of Transmittal



Her Honour, the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield,
Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

May it Please Your Honour:

I respectfully submit the Annual Report of the Ministry of Social Services for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015.

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to increased accountability, to honouring its commitments and to managing expenditures responsibly on behalf of Saskatchewan people.

We will continue to build on these achievements in the year ahead as we deliver on Government's commitments to the people of Saskatchewan.

Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services



The Honourable Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services

Dear Minister:

I have the honour of submitting the Annual Report of the Ministry of Social Services for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015.

I acknowledge responsibility for this report and assure that the information contained herein is accurate, complete and reliable. I further acknowledge responsibility for the financial administration and management control of the Ministry.

Ken Acton
Deputy Minister of Social Services

Introduction

This annual report for the Ministry of Social Services presents the Ministry's results on activities and outcomes for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015. It reports to the public and elected officials on public commitments made and other key accomplishments of the Ministry.

Results are provided on publicly committed strategies, actions, and performance measures identified in the 2014-15 Plan.

The report also demonstrates progress made on Government commitments in the Government Direction for 2014-15: Steady Growth, the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth – Vision 2020 and Beyond (<http://www.finance.gov.sk.ca/PlanningAndReporting/2014-15/SSPlan1415.pdf>), throne speeches, and other commitments and activities of the Ministry.

The annual report demonstrates the Ministry's commitment to effective public performance reporting, transparency, and accountability to the public.

Alignment with Government's Direction

The Ministry's activities in 2014-15 align with Government's vision and four goals:

Our Government's Vision

A strong and growing Saskatchewan – the best place in Canada to live, to work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family, and to build a life.

Government's Goals

- Sustaining growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people.
- Meeting the challenges of growth.
- Securing a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people.
- Delivering responsive and responsible government.

Together, all ministries and agencies support the achievement of Government's four goals and work towards a secure and prosperous Saskatchewan.

Ministry Overview

As the Ministry of Social Services, we exist to assist the most vulnerable citizens in Saskatchewan. We often meet people during the darkest and most difficult times of their lives. We are here to help keep Saskatchewan strong by supporting and strengthening its most valuable resource – its people. Although we deliver programs and services to those in need across this great province, the most important thing we provide is hope for a better tomorrow.

Our Mission

We protect Saskatchewan's vulnerable people and support their inclusion in the province's prosperity.

Our Mandate

The Ministry supports citizens at risk as they work to build better lives for themselves through economic independence, strong families, and strong community organizations. The Ministry assists these efforts through income support, child and family services, supports for people with disabilities, efforts to develop affordable housing, and by building greater capacity in community-based organizations.

With a 2014-15 budget of \$963 million and approximately 2,000 employees, Social Services is one of the largest ministries in the Government of Saskatchewan and serves more than 200,000 people annually.

Ministry programs are delivered through 20 service centres and more than 40 day offices in communities across the province. Initial application for the Ministry's financial assistance programs is primarily through a central, telephone-based Client Service Centre. Applicants for the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability program may choose to visit the local Service Centre nearest their home.

The Ministry interacts with citizens in many ways to support them including face-to-face meetings in our offices, by telephone, through in-home meetings, by email, by responding to web site inquiries as well as through our many community-based partners across the province.

Associated Offices

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation

Housing programs and services are offered through the Ministry by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC), a Treasury Board Crown Corporation with offices in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. SHC leads the development of provincial housing policy and manages financial contributions from the provincial, federal, and municipal levels of government. SHC, in partnership with housing authorities, the public and private sector, has provided access to affordable, suitable and adequate housing to people who have an identified need and who could not afford it without assistance.

The Status of Women Office

The Status of Women Office (SWO) adds capacity to Government's policy and decision-making function by conducting sex- and gender-based analysis. The SWO also develops and reports on equality indicators to identify changes that will modify and shape programs and services to respond to emerging priorities for women and their families.

The SWO is leading this work across our province through collaboration with government ministries, Crown corporations, agencies, and others.

The Office of Disability Issues

The Office of Disability Issues serves as a focal point for government initiatives on disabilities. The Office collaborates and partners with the disability community and has a direct working relationship with other ministries and the public.

Partnerships and Operating Agreements

The Ministry held about 750 contracts with approximately 200 community-based organizations across the province in 2014-15 – an investment of over \$228 million.

Services that we contract through community-based organizations range from group homes for people with intellectual disabilities to mobile crisis units.

About 260 housing authorities deliver SHC's rental housing programs, and manage SHC's housing portfolio. Other Housing partners include non-profit corporations and co-operatives, Aboriginal housing providers, and private landlords who own and manage housing for low- and moderate-income tenants.

SHC also works with municipalities, provincial government ministries, and the federal government to integrate housing programs and services with other key initiatives.

The Ministry delegates the provision of child protection services and services for children in care on-reserve to First Nations Child and Family Service (FNCFS) agencies through 17 delegation agreements between the Ministry and First Nations agencies. The Ministry also has separate agreements with three FNCFS agencies to provide child protection services in particular off-reserve communities.

Progress in 2014-15

We are pleased to report on our Ministry progress in 2014-15. The work we accomplished in the past year was done in support of the Government of Saskatchewan's four goals.

Our work in 2014-15 focused on areas where the Ministry of Social Services could make the greatest strides for our vulnerable clients. To that end, our Ministry has the following three goals or key areas of focus which align with the Government of Saskatchewan's.

Most importantly, they align with the needs of those we serve across the province.

Our goals are to ensure:

- Our programs and services set the foundation to meet our clients' basic needs.
- Citizens gain independence through self-reliance and prevention.
- Our people and our organization are effective and efficient.

We are pleased to share the progress the Ministry of Social Services made during the past year on each of our goals.

Our Goal: Our programs and services set the foundation to meet our clients' basic needs.

The Importance of Housing

Having a home is such a basic need, but without one, life can be devastating. SHC worked hard throughout 2014-15 to ensure families in need of affordable low and moderate income housing had a place to call home.

Often this work involved partnerships with others including municipalities, builders, lenders, local housing providers, and non-profits – such as Habitat for Humanity.

Homeownership begins with a home where families can put down roots, plan for their future, and become a part of the community.

Many families have a dream of owning their own home. However, some are faced with limited resources and other challenges that can make that dream seem very far away.

We were pleased in the past year to once again work side by side with our Habitat partners across Saskatchewan to help make the dream of homeownership a wonderful reality for many families in need.



MLA Laura Ross speaks at Habitat for Humanity Key Ceremony in Regina

Saskatchewan is like that. We truly have that "can do" spirit that has built our province to what it is today. It's the foundation of our province's *Plan for Growth* - to create a province that is welcoming and co-operative and to support one another in building a better, stronger Saskatchewan.

In 2014, 24 Habitat homes were completed or in progress in 10 communities, making homeownership a reality for many Saskatchewan families.

At the same time, we committed to support the homeownership dreams of 12 more Habitat families with an investment of \$750,000. SHC now provides \$65,000 per home in funding which is an increase from the \$50,000 per home provided up to March 2014.

Behind all these numbers are real families who have been transformed. When a family has a home, they can focus on making everything else better. And once you have a home of your own, you can begin to look outward, lending a hand to others in your community.

There were many happy tears shed at Habitat key ceremonies across the province throughout the year, and we were there to share in the celebration. It's an exciting culmination of a lot of hard work, and we were proud to have been a part of it.

SHC, along with providing safe and affordable homes for Saskatchewan residents, also invests capital dollars into other meaningful projects such as domestic violence shelters and group homes. Below is a recent project we were especially proud to be a part of in 2014-15.

SHC has been working with North East Outreach & Support Services (NEOSS) in Melfort to build an emergency shelter for women and children fleeing violence. The shelter build began in the spring of 2014 after SHC committed \$1.5 million in capital funding for construction, and the Ministry of Justice committed operational funds. It was about two-thirds complete when a tragic fire broke out and the shelter burned to the ground last November.

By the spring of 2015, construction was underway again thanks to insurance support from SGI, increased funding from SHC for \$1.66 million, and new construction contracts. We're happy to share that every last contractor stayed on to rebuild the shelter rather than take on more lucrative projects!

Because NEOSS and their partners – SHC, private contractors, SGI, and Justice – didn't give up, vulnerable women and children will soon have a safe place to stay at the North East Outreach Domestic Violence Shelter while they rebuild their lives.

**There is no doubt that when we work
as one team, lives are made better.**



Keeping Housing Options Strong

In this same spirit, we continued our partnerships with municipalities, builders, lenders, and non-profits throughout 2014-15 to create more housing and help people gain access to it.

It's no secret that Saskatchewan's population is growing. In order to meet the demands of this growth, we invested a great deal in new housing over the past year. Housing starts are well above the 10 year average and 2014 saw over 8,200 housing starts across the province. In fact, the past three years of rental starts have exceeded the previous 15 years combined.

Under the Secondary Suite, Rental Development, and Affordable Home Ownership Programs and through the Rental Construction Incentive and HeadStart on a Home, we were able to provide more homeownership and rental opportunities for people with low-to-moderate incomes.

To help provide more affordable housing options for seniors, we expanded the Life Lease Program to Meadow Lake, Melfort, Tisdale, Nipawin, Estevan and Weyburn. The Life Lease Program is ideal for seniors wanting an affordable place to live with less financial risk and relief from the responsibilities of home ownership.

Through SHC and other government housing programs, 1,695 housing units were completed in 2014, which added 914 units to the rental housing stock and helped 781 families acquire a home.

We also continued to work closely with our partners in the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to invest in affordable housing in the past year. On August 26, 2014, we signed a five-year extension to the Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) Agreement with CMHC, which will invest approximately \$92 million over five years to ensure that households in housing need have improved access to affordable housing that is sound, suitable, and sustainable.

Thanks to these investments over the past year, three IAH funded projects not only employed apprentices, thereby increasing awareness and promoting apprenticeship training, but also, the supply of affordable housing increased by 202 units. Two hundred and thirty-two households are no longer living in inadequate conditions, 10 seniors and three people with disabilities are able to remain living independently, and six victims of family violence were able to leave violent situations. The IAH investments have resulted in a total of 453 households no longer in housing need.

Since 2011, a combined investment of \$47 million has resulted in a total of 1,657 households no longer in housing need as a result of IAH.

(If you are interested in learning more about the great work we do with our federal housing partner, CMHC, you'll find additional detail in Appendix B.)

Balancing Vacancy Rates

One of the biggest challenges that comes with our province's population growth is managing vacancy rates.

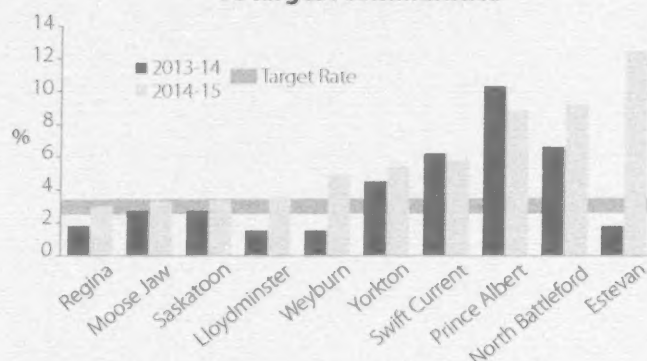
Generally, having a vacancy rate between 2.5 and 3.5 per cent allows renters to find adequate housing and landlords to receive a fair return on their investment.

Provincial vacancy rate increased from **1.9%** in 2011 to **4.1%** last year.

Our goal in 2014-15 was to keep provincial vacancy rates within the balanced range. We're actually sitting at an average of 4.1 per cent in Saskatchewan, which is slightly above the balanced market range.

Three urban centres: Regina, Moose Jaw, and Saskatoon – are within the balanced range. The remaining seven urban communities are experiencing higher vacancy rates which could be due to the increase in rental supply and homeownership rates. In some cases, centres with smaller rental markets are influenced more by local changes in employment, population, or the economy.

Vacancy rates for Saskatchewan's 10 largest communities



We are mindful that we need to manage a balance between supply and demand. Housing units that sit empty are not helping families or seniors in need. Our future work will focus on improving conditions for households in greatest need rather than creating more housing.

Although we have put a number of programs in place throughout the years that have helped to balance vacancy rates and create record numbers of new rental units, low-income families were still having a hard time paying rent or getting into a house. In response, we converted the Affordable Housing Rental Program to the Social Housing Rental Program in larger communities to help ensure that people with low-income and with the greatest need will have better access to Social Housing.

As a result of this change, about 2,700 units will move from a fixed rent to a rent based on 30 per cent of household income.

It is also important to ensure that the homes we provide are safe and well-maintained. When some units become too costly to maintain, it is important to replace them with more modern and energy efficient ones. To help cover the cost of building these new homes, SHC is selling up to 300 of its single-family homes in Regina, Moose Jaw and Prince Albert to help build more modern and energy efficient multi-unit housing in these communities. As of March 2015, 74 homes have been sold.

This Portfolio Renewal will create more affordable housing opportunities through the sale of these units to first-time homebuyers. It will also provide housing that is more modern for Social Housing tenants with less ongoing maintenance costs for SHC. In 2014, 30 units were completed in Prince Albert and 91 units were under construction in Moose Jaw. In Regina, a Request for Proposals to build 24 to 48 units was in progress at year-end.

Building new units in these communities will help make sure that there is a good supply of quality social housing both now and into the future.

We're a Good Landlord

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is the largest landlord in the province. We manage approximately 18,200 homes across Saskatchewan. We work hard to provide good, clean, safe homes for the many families, individuals, seniors and people with special needs who are our tenants, and we value and appreciate their feedback.

SHC regularly conducts tenant surveys to help us identify areas for improvement and also to know what is working well.

SHC has set a target for the tenant satisfaction rating to reach 90 per cent by 2018. As of the end of 2014, 84 per cent of tenants surveyed reported being satisfied with their housing.

Here are a few of the comments we were happy to receive in the past year from the surveys:

"My experience as a tenant has been very enjoyable and it has allowed me to be very independent and to live on my own for over 3 years now."

"We feel fortunate to be able to live in a safe place we can afford on our limited income that is large enough to accommodate our family."

"I am very thankful to be able to live here with such affordable rent for me and my son. Without you I wouldn't have a home."

Our Goal: Citizens gain independence through self-reliance and prevention.

Helping Children and Families

Throughout 2014-15, we continued our commitment to support our clients through the challenges in their lives. For some, that is overcoming addictions and destructive behaviours; for others it is establishing new foundations for a healthy life – a home, an education, a better life.

The story below is one we are especially happy to share. It's a great example of how the Ministry of Social Services helped someone achieve their dream of a new, safe, and healthy life.

Amanda¹ was a homeless teenager struggling with drug and alcohol abuse, she had been sexually assaulted several times and she had involvement with the criminal justice system. Her addictions became so severe in 2014 that she was eventually hospitalized for a drug overdose.

Her Ministry protection worker was deeply concerned for her well-being. Although we offered her shelter and services, Amanda continually refused.

1. No real names are used in any of the stories provided.

Out of ongoing concern for her situation, Amanda's caseworker arranged for her to attend secure detox, followed by a residential placement with Ranch Ehrlo.

While at Ranch Ehrlo, a Ministry Youth Transitions worker began working with Amanda. Once Amanda became sober and clear-headed at the Ranch, the worker was able to help her develop a plan that was based on Amanda's own goals, values and interests. She wanted to obtain an education, get a job and live on her own.

During this time, the Ranch Ehrlo staff and the Ministry worker did a significant amount of work with Amanda around the trauma she had experienced from the sexual assaults and her unstable childhood. This helped to reduce her anger and allowed her to focus on the future. Throughout this process, it was discovered that Amanda is a talented artist with an interest in music and fashion.

In the fall of 2014, Amanda's Ministry worker and Ranch Ehrlo staff began helping Amanda to move back into her home community. Amanda was committed to working with her supports throughout this process and took ownership in seeing her plan through.

Amanda is currently living in a Peer Home operated by a CBO, consistently attending a community school as well as keeping all of her community commitments, and will be finished her probation in summer of 2015.

Thanks to the teamwork between our Ministry staff, other government services, and our community-based partners, Amanda is now on her way to realizing her dreams.

We're so happy for Amanda and also glad that we had the opportunity to support her in achieving a new healthy and safe lifestyle.

Keeping Children Safe

Nelson Mandela once said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

In Saskatchewan, children are our most valuable, yet vulnerable citizens. As parents, grandparents, family, and friends, we care deeply about our children and want to ensure they have every opportunity to live happy, fulfilling lives.

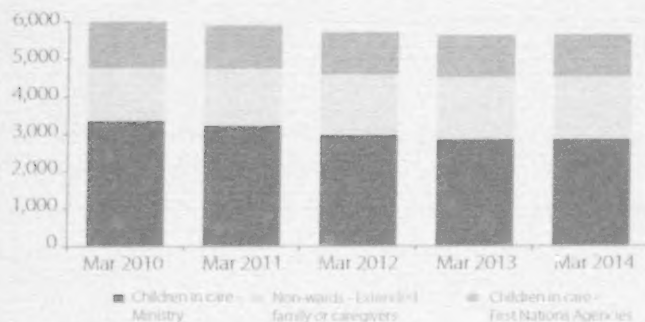
At the Ministry of Social Services, we want the same thing for children in our care – children just like Amanda. Their safety and well-being is our number one priority. We have worked hard to make sure that the best interests of children and families were met through numerous programs and services.

In many cases, keeping a child in their family home with supports is the best option. If it is a safe option, our priority is to work with families and their communities to help keep them together.

This past year, we set out to keep families together more frequently. The number of children in care has decreased over the past five years due to our ongoing efforts to offer intensive in-home supports to keep families together.



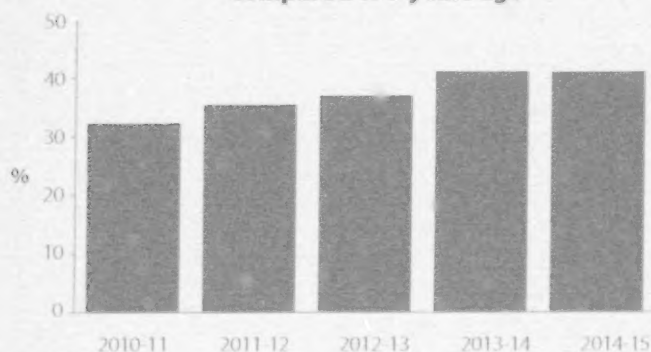
Number of children in out-of-home care



**Note - Children in care - First Nations Agencies is provided by Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada (AANDC). The AANDC data is reported annually on March 31 and later reconciled.*

When it is not possible to keep children with their immediate family, we try to place them with extended family caregivers and reunify children with their families when it is safe to do so. Forty-one per cent of children who could not safely remain in their homes were placed with extended family members or caregivers in 2014-15.

Children are placed more often with extended family members or caregivers compared to 5 years ago



Child and Family Programs use a number of preventative services to put the best interests of children first and to help safely maintain children in their family home.

Last year, we funded 112 CBOs and six provincial organizations throughout Saskatchewan to provide preventative and intensive in-home supports to children, youth, and their families.

Here is a quick summary of three programs which support this work:

Flexible Response - keeps children safe by working with both the child and the family to meet their needs. The Flexible Response project, which was piloted in Saskatoon last year, redesigned the way child protection services responds to reports of child harm through alternative service delivery and decision-making approaches. The pilot is currently being evaluated and plans to expand the program will be based on the evaluation findings.

Intensive In-Home Supports provide intensive, short-term interventions to families in crisis. This approach aims to reduce child apprehensions and help families become better at caring for and nurturing their children. Community-based organizations deliver these programs in Regina, Saskatoon, and Yorkton.

The Positive Parenting Program is a parent training preventative program that aims to promote positive, caring relationships between parents and their children. It also helps parents find new ways of dealing with a variety of childhood behaviour problems and common developmental issues. The program, initially operating in Regina, Sandy Bay and Yorkton, is being delivered by two First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) agencies. This past year, we also expanded this program to Humboldt, Meadow Lake, Swift Current, and Fort Qu'Appelle.

In addition to creating and expanding new programs to improve the child welfare system, it is important to re-examine the system itself to make sure it remains relevant to the children and families we serve.

In 2014-15, the Ministry engaged both the public and our community partners as part of a review of *The Child and Family Services Act* and *The Adoption Act*. The feedback from these sessions will allow us to recommend changes to the legislation - changes that will make life better for Saskatchewan children and families.

Another important focus for us this past year was to work more closely with our First Nations agencies and organizations to ensure that children were receiving the best help possible.

We did this by supporting FNCFS agencies in their pursuit of accreditation, which requires the agency to meet strict standards. We are also working with FNCFS agencies to develop agency plans with defined targets, including the pursuit and sustainability of FNCFS agency accreditation.

Currently, we have agreements in place with 17 FNCFS agencies for delegated child welfare services on-reserve and separate agreements with three FNCFS agencies to provide child protection services off-reserve for particular communities. We've improved our oversight of these agencies by conducting quality assurance reviews on an annual basis instead of every three years.

The Best Place in Canada for People with Disabilities

Our goal is exactly what the heading states – we want to make Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live for people with disabilities.

In order to do this, we need to improve the quality of life and support community inclusion for people who have disabilities.

In 2014-15, we continued our commitment to create a Disability Strategy for Saskatchewan by working closely with a Citizen Consultation Team, the disability community, and other government bodies. We received over 1,600 submissions throughout this comprehensive public consultation process.

It was an inclusive exercise that gathered input from:

- the public,
- members of the disability community,
- community-based organizations,
- employers,
- municipalities,

- school divisions,
- post-secondary institutions,
- Aboriginal communities, and
- health authorities.

In total, 15 public meetings were held in 11 communities across the province. Sessions focusing on Aboriginal perspectives were held in eight locations including northern Saskatchewan.

All feedback was rolled into a report summarizing the conversations and feedback from meetings, social media, an online survey, and written submissions. The report, titled *Our Experience. Our Voice* was released last year and is available on our website.

In our public consultations, we focused on the priority areas for the Strategy that were identified in the *Plan for Growth*:

- housing,
- transportation,
- employment,
- education,
- support for community inclusion, and
- support for caregivers.



While there were differences in the details, there was amazing similarity in the major themes that were heard across all priority areas.

These themes are the common "big picture" ideas that illustrate the values Saskatchewan people hold and want to see reflected in a Disability Strategy. Here are a few examples of the themes we heard people say are important to them:

- acceptance,
- person-centred approach,
- finding supports and services,
- fair access and eligibility,
- life span continuity, and
- building for the future.

We're grateful to all the people across Saskatchewan who came forward to share their ideas on how we can better support people living with disabilities in Saskatchewan.

We know that ongoing partnerships and collaboration will be important in the development and implementation of the Disability Strategy.

Several recommendations from the report advise we need to work with our government ministry partners to establish a multi-ministry partnership to focus on service and intervention for those with cognitive disabilities and/or mental health issues. Another recommendation was to expand navigation and planning services for people experiencing disability to help connect them to appropriate supports in their community.

We believe this is good advice and we will look to the Province's new Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, and other cross-ministry collaborations to guide this work.

Co-ordinating and Navigating the System

The Ministry provides funding to many community-based organizations (CBOs) that work with individuals with an intellectual disability. We are always pleased to learn that our funding, through the work of the CBO, is making a positive impact with clients. Here is a story about a client whose life was changed as a result of our partnership.

Bill's experience of disability includes impaired motor, cognitive, and social development, as well as difficulties with communication.

Bill's Adult Basic Education program instructor referred him for an assessment because he displayed problems with reading and math. The results of the assessment indicated that Bill has a mild intellectual disability. Bill was very disappointed in his academic progress and what it meant for his future employment opportunities.

A local community-based organization helped arrange a work "try-out" for Bill as a gas attendant for a national petroleum company.

He was hired following this work assessment and continues to work there full-time.

Bill is very hard working.

The company understands and recognizes his strengths and challenges, and, if needed, there is always someone Bill can go to for help. This employer has been very considerate, patient, and understanding.

We're so happy for Bill and so grateful to the 200 CBOs we work with across Saskatchewan for their great work in supporting our province's most vulnerable.

Throughout the past year, we also continued implementing recommendations that came from the Task Team on Income Support for People with Disabilities.

As of March 2015, enrolment in the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disabilities (SAID) program had grown to over 13,500 people.

Throughout 2014-15, a number of enhancements were made to the SAID program including improvements to case management processes, materials, and client service. All of these changes will help our clients realize their goals.

People with intellectual disabilities are an important part of the communities in which we live and last year we continued to support them and celebrated with them when they achieved new milestones.

A fellow named Samuel tentatively approached the local Income Assistance Service Centre in one of our northern communities last year. Samuel was new to the community, was homeless and illiterate, and he didn't know what to do or where to turn.

The Income Assistance worker who met with him gently walked Samuel through his options and helped him fill out a housing application. Samuel now has a home. The worker also helped Samuel find necessities for his new home.

Samuel recently bumped into the Income Assistance worker's supervisor on the street and asked her to thank the worker for him. He was very grateful for the help he received and excited about his new life.

While that support was just "all in a day's work" for the worker, it was life changing for Samuel.

We also continued our work in 2014-15 to transition people living at Valley View Centre (VVC) in Moose Jaw into the communities of their choice.

Two new government operated assessment and stabilization homes were opened in Saskatoon and Moose Jaw to help residents of VVC make a smooth transition to the community.

To further assist this transition, we held individual planning sessions for each resident, along with their families, advocates from the Saskatchewan Association of Community Living (SACL), and staff who work closely with them at Valley View.

As of March 2015, four VVC residents have successfully transitioned into the community, and we have a plan to transition up to 30 more in the coming year.

As part of our ongoing commitment to enhance the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities, a self-directed funding pilot took place over the past year.

Self-directed funding will allow clients to gain greater control over how their supports and services are delivered, providing them with greater choice over life decisions and the ability to select services that best meet their needs.

So far, two out of the eight participants now have a self-directed funding contract in place. If the pilot is successful, this funding model will be an option for all Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD) clients with intellectual disabilities.

Helping People to Help Themselves

One of the best things we get to see in our Ministry are people stepping away from the support we provide and stepping into a new independent life through a new job or better education.

In 2014-15, we targeted our supports and approaches to help Income Assistance clients reduce the barriers that prevent them from achieving their dreams.

The story below was one that could have ended very differently, but we're glad that with our support, the client was able to make the good healthy choices to improve her life and become independent.

Last year, Child and Family Programs continued working with a mom, Sarah and her two sons. Sarah was struggling with alcohol abuse and intravenous drug use and she was also living with a partner who was violent and abusive. Initially, Sarah was very reluctant to accept any help or even admit there were any problems. She was often hostile and resistant to our services.

Sarah gave birth to a third child who was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). She continued to struggle with substance abuse to the point where she attended a public event with her children while intoxicated and was stopped by police for drunk driving.

The Ministry didn't give up on Sarah and continued to work with her. We also took steps to ensure her children were safe and well cared for. With her agreement, we placed her older children with their biological father and the younger child with his grandparents.

Sarah continued to be very resistant to our help and was consistently belligerent towards her caseworker.

Despite her continued hostility, the caseworker remained calm and continued to meet Sarah and help her wherever possible. Sarah attempted to complete treatment on a few occasions and was eventually able to finish it.

Sarah maintained contact and was supported by her addictions counselor and child protection worker. She had a strong recovery plan and started to demonstrate sobriety.

The father of the two oldest children maintained custody but began to allow Sarah access to her children. The boys are living in a stable environment and continue to have visits with their mother.

Sarah's parents are now supportive of her, and Sarah's youngest son was returned to her care. Her son will always struggle because of the FASD, but she knows that she needs to parent him differently than the other children. Sarah is taking steps to learn parenting techniques for children with FASD.

Sarah is now in a new supportive relationship and is parenting a new one year-old son. This pregnancy was healthy as it was free from drugs and alcohol.

Today, Sarah is completing a practicum to obtain a youth care worker diploma. When she graduates this summer, she would like to help other youth make better choices so they don't end up abusing drugs and alcohol like she did.

Sarah and her family have since expressed appreciation to the Ministry for not giving up on her, despite her hostility and uncooperative behaviour.

In order to help other clients like Sarah become more self sufficient, we began a one-year pilot project in Prince Albert last year where we worked intensively with single parents to help them find work or get the education they need.

The results of this pilot will be used to inform our future approach to client service.

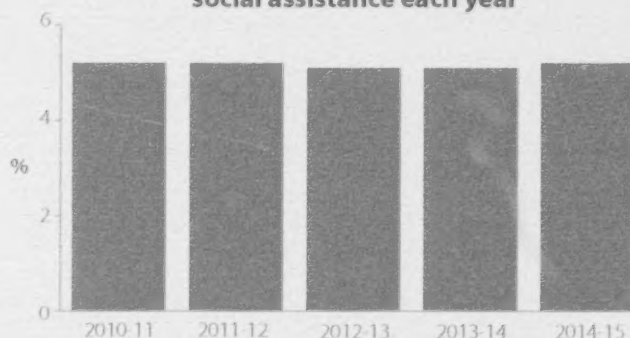
The number of Income Assistance clients we serve fluctuates throughout the year. It is influenced by things like population change, the state of the economy, demand for labour, and disability rates.

For us, fewer clients is a good thing – it means we were able to support more individuals and families to become independent.

Last year, the enrolment rate for income assistance in Saskatchewan stayed about the same at five per cent of the eligible population.

This number reflects those enrolled in the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP), our Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA) or the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program.

Five per cent of people in Saskatchewan use social assistance each year



Clients continued to leave us relatively quickly throughout the year with 72 per cent of SAP and TEA clients only needing our help for six months or less last year.

*(*Note – "enrolment rate" refers to the number of people on the programs expressed as a percentage of the provincial population age 0-64 living off-reserve.)*

Our Goal: Our people and our organization are effective and efficient.

The Ministry is dedicated to helping our clients – the people we serve and support. By focusing on citizen-centred service delivery, we can ensure our programs are appropriate, effective, and efficiently delivered.

We are renewing our programs and services and the way they are delivered. This is being achieved through:

- Understanding citizen needs and expectations, and transforming how we work to deliver services more efficiently and effectively.
- Continuously improving through innovation, responsible risk taking, program reviews, and process improvement efforts.
- Working collaboratively across ministries to provide citizen needs.
- Investing in the skills, capacity, and engagement of our workforce to enable employees to serve citizens with excellence.

In 2014-15, we worked towards a culture that demonstrates commitment to excellence, accountability and innovation in the delivery of programs and services, collaboration with our partners, and a safe, healthy, productive, and inclusive workplace.

Being Accountable

We are accountable to the people we serve and responsible for wisely using the public funds we are given. Throughout the past year, we did this by continuing to work on:

- a risk management strategy,
- a business technology plan,
- an improved performance management system,
- business process improvement efforts such as Lean, and
- program reviews and evaluations.

Improving Client Outcomes

We continue to apply a client-centred lens to all of the work we do.

In the past year we continued to simplify our programs and services to improve client experience and facilitate better outcomes.

We make every effort to keep the client's perspective front and centre when we make improvements to our programs and services.

Some examples of this work from the past year includes: the broad public consultation we did to find out what Saskatchewan citizens who are experiencing disabilities need; the work we continue to do with our cross-government partners on citizen focused initiatives such as the Child and Family Agenda; as well as the changes we have made in our Social Housing program in order to ensure access to housing is targeted to people in the greatest housing need.



Finding Innovative New Ways to Support Our Vulnerable Clients

The Ministry was also involved in a unique pilot program called Sweet Dreams, which helps keep single mothers and their children together.

The goal of this program is to keep 22 children with their mothers out of the foster care system for at least six months after the mother leaves the program.

This five year pilot project began in May 2014, and involves our Ministry, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Saskatoon Downtown Youth Centre (EGADZ). The program is funded through a Social Impact Bond (SIB) – the first funding model of its kind in Canada.

Under the SIB, the Ministry has entered into an agreement with private investors and EGADZ that sets a desired social outcome and promises to pay investors if and only if EGADZ achieves the desired outcome.

If successful, Sweet Dreams has the potential to save taxpayers between \$540,000 to \$1.5 million in foster care costs over the next five years.

These savings are based on the cost of children in care of the Minister of Social Services.

There may also be other potential savings related to health, criminal justice, and any future income assistance.

Stronger Together – Working with Partners

In 2014-15, we worked with other governments, ministries, and community partners to improve the lives of Saskatchewan people.

We supported the Child and Family Agenda Action Plan as a ministry partner to help meet the needs of children, youth, and families at risk.

Several of our projects, including Flexible Response, Intensive In-Home Supports, and the Positive Parenting Program continue to support the Agenda's goals.

Through our Status of Women Office (SWO), we led work across government to address key aspects of gender equality in the province.

As the lead ministry on the Disability Strategy for Saskatchewan, we continue to work closely with our partners in the ministries of Health, Education, Advanced Education, Economy, Government Relations, Justice, and Corrections and Policing.

We also continued to review our work with the community-based organization (CBO) sector to identify ways in which we can support and strengthen their efforts to recruit and retain staff.

The Ministry of Social Services is also a partner in the *Building Partnerships to Reduce Crime (BPRC)* initiative designed to bring agencies together to deliver a range of human services in an integrated, timely manner.

Our ministry employees participate in the ten HUBs located throughout the province to support immediate, integrated responses to address situations involving at-risk individuals or families.

In 2014-15, we also focused on our commitment to ensure our Ministry staff are supported in serving our clients. Below are a few updates on the work we are doing towards that important work.

A Great Place to Work

At the Ministry of Social Services, our work tends to be stressful at times. It's so important that our employees have a great, compassionate, and understanding place to work in each day.

We believe our workplace culture is important and we have developed a Culture Committee, made up of staff from across the province, to be our culture ambassadors. Throughout 2014-15, they have done some great work.

In 2014, our Culture Committee developed and administered an employee engagement survey to establish benchmarks on four core Saskatchewan public service values: respect and integrity, serving citizens, excellence and innovation, and one team.

Seventy-one per cent of Ministry staff participated, with 61 per cent feeling positive about their workplace. Ministry employees were most positive about the demonstration of respect and integrity and serving citizens.

As a result of this feedback, the Culture Committee decided to focus efforts on employee recognition in the coming year. Work is currently underway to create and launch a new Ministry recognition program in the summer of 2015.

We know our employees are doing great work supporting our clients across the province, and we want to make sure they know how much we appreciate them!

Other key areas of focus identified by the Culture Committee include communication, retention, innovation, and workload pressures.

Keeping Employees Safe at Work

Our employees work hard and sometimes, despite our best efforts, staff can get injured at work. We share in the province's Mission Zero movement and in 2014-15 we continued our commitment to decrease the number of our workplace injuries.

Throughout the past year, we did reduce our workplace injury rate from 6.9 per cent to 6.3 per cent by implementing a variety of safety plan actions:

- We identified a safety objective for inclusion in all our 2015-16 management and employees' work plans.
- We delivered a variety of safety training to our staff including *Supervision and Safety* training to more than 160 supervisors across the Ministry to ensure they are aware of their legal duties for maintaining a safe workplace.
- We developed a new safety policy for all staff.

- We also developed a 2014 Safety Improvement Plan (SIP) with a focus on the following areas:

- slips, trips, and falls,
- physical exertion,
- accountability,
- safety training, and
- safety leadership.

Our efforts to reduce our workplace injury rate are ongoing; we continue to engage with our colleagues across the Government of Saskatchewan on various committees which have been developed to focus on this work, such as the Safety Champion Council.

**We value the safety of our employees
and will continue to work closely with
them to ensure they return home
injury free at the end of each work day.**

A Diverse Workforce

There are many reasons for organizations to achieve a diverse workforce. We believe strengthening diversity within the Ministry of Social Services will equip us to:

- provide culturally sensitive services by better reflecting the population of the province and our Ministry clients;
- consider a variety of opinions and experiences in order to become more creative in finding solutions to the challenges faced by our clients;
- ensure access to the widest talent pool possible; and
- create positive opportunities to better serve the people of Saskatchewan and contribute to a great quality of life for all citizens.

Within the Ministry, our representation of visible minority persons, youth and women in senior management positions continues to rise and are either meeting or above targets. The targets are set by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC).

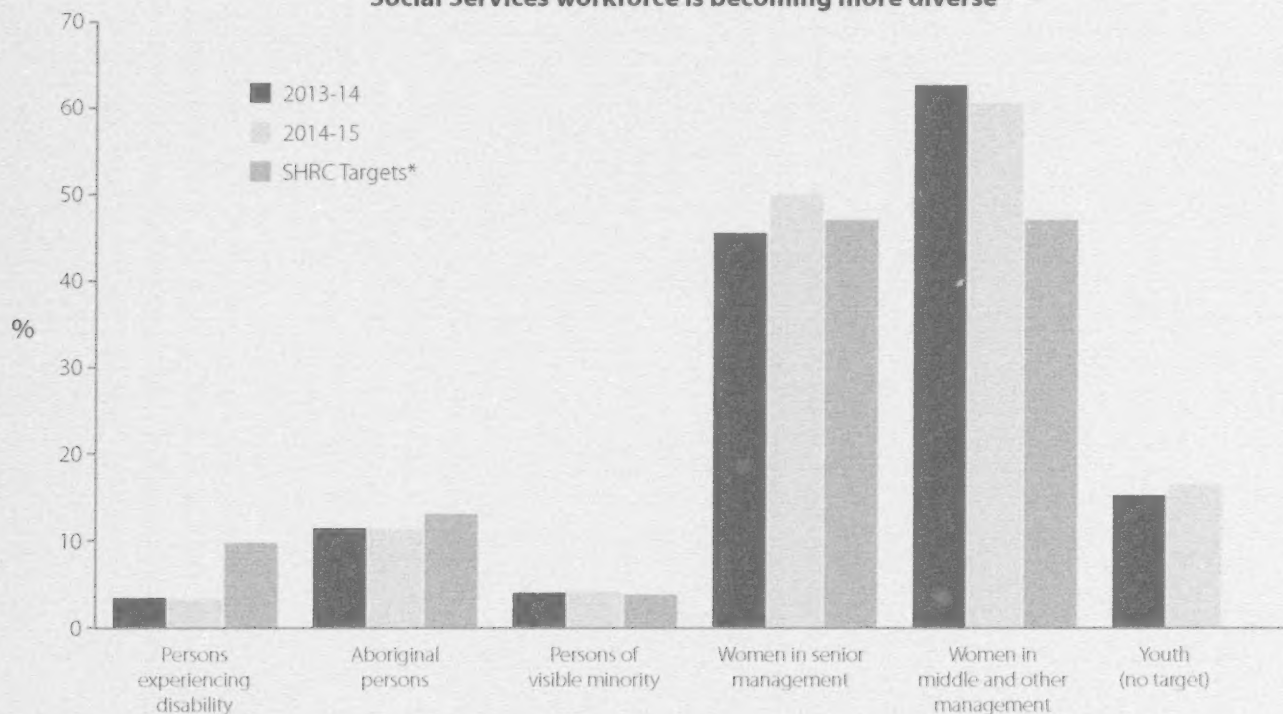
In other areas, such as the number of Aboriginal persons or persons with a disability, we continue to work toward meeting targets.

It's important to us that our workforce understands and appreciates the diversity of our clients and is representative of that diversity. We look forward to ongoing work in this area as we continue our commitments to provide effective supports to our clients.

In closing, while there is still much more work to be done for those in need across Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Social Services is proud of the work we did to help our clients last year.

The stories we shared in this year's annual report are just a few examples of the wonderful people we were able to support in realizing their dreams of independence and fuller lives.

Social Services workforce is becoming more diverse



2014-15 Financial Overview

Expenditures

The Ministry's actual expenditures for 2014-15 were \$985.0 million, which was \$22.0 million over the original budgeted appropriation of \$963.0 million. The Ministry received supplementary funds of \$29.7 million midway through the year to cover the budget shortfall related to pressures for the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP), Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program, Child and Family Program Maintenance and Support, Emergency Social Services, and Valley View Centre transition capital costs.

The majority of the budget shortfall related to an increase in new clients and the transition of clients from the Saskatchewan Assistance Program to the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability program. There was also a cost per case increase in the Saskatchewan Assistance Program compared to budget. Additionally, complex and special needs requirements and increased costs per case for private treatment for children resulted in higher costs for Child and Family Services compared to budget.

Revenues

Social Services collects revenue related to fees from Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, cost-sharing programs with the federal government, and receipts from clients who have been overpaid public assistance benefits in prior years. All revenue collected is deposited into the General Revenue Fund.

In 2014-15, the Ministry collected revenues of \$33.4 million, which was \$4.9 million more than the budget of \$28.5 million. The variance is largely attributed to the collection of some of the 2013-14 Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) revenue received in 2014-15 and the receipt of monies collected for overpayments.

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Utilization

The Ministry's 2014-15 FTE budget as per the restated 2014-15 Estimates was 1,731.0. The actual FTE utilization for the year was 1,852.7 FTEs, of which 56.3 FTEs were utilized for students. The remaining over-utilization of 65.4 FTEs was primarily related to the deferred timing of some program changes until 2015-16.

Other

The Ministry is responsible for Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) which is a Treasury Board Crown corporation. Information on housing, including SHC's annual report for its fiscal year ended December 31, 2014, can be found at <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/SHC>.

2014-15 Expenditure Results

The following table outlines actual and budgeted expenditures by subvote and subprogram and provides explanations for significant variances.

	(in thousands of dollars)			Variance	
	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Budget	2014-15 Actual	Over/ (Under)	Notes
Subvote/Allocation					
Central Management and Services (SS01)					
Minister's Salary	\$ 47	\$ 48	\$ 48	\$ 0	
Executive Management	2,138	1,680	1,720	40	
Central Services	27,375	26,356	26,133	(223)	
Accommodation Services	20,935	22,004	22,708	704	1
Subvote Total	\$ 50,495	\$ 50,088	\$ 50,609	\$ 521	
Income Assistance and Disability Services (SS03)					
Saskatchewan Assistance Program	\$ 163,172	\$ 152,493	\$ 163,694	\$ 11,201	2
Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability	157,456	173,610	185,479	11,869	3
Transitional Employment Allowance	17,851	17,372	17,450	78	
Seniors Income Plan	26,102	25,983	26,425	442	
Saskatchewan Employment Supplement	17,357	16,135	15,810	(325)	
Saskatchewan Child Benefit	646	--	--	--	
Child Care Parent Subsidies	15,435	14,675	14,637	(38)	
Rental Housing Supplements	35,298	38,937	38,489	(448)	
Income Assistance Community Services	2,599	2,863	2,797	(66)	
Disabilities Community-Based Organizations	146,477	165,793	153,153	(12,640)	4
Income Assistance and Disability Services Program	50,816	48,900	54,497	5,597	5
Seniors Personal Care Home Benefit	2,979	3,696	3,364	(332)	
Subvote Total	\$ 636,188	\$ 660,457	\$ 675,795	\$ 15,338	
Child and Family Services (SS04)					
Child and Family Program Maintenance and Support	\$ 97,125	\$ 89,631	\$ 107,980	\$ 18,349	6
Child and Family Community-Based Organization Services	75,707	88,448	81,405	(7,043)	7
Child and Family Program Delivery	46,802	40,318	44,905	4,587	8
Subvote Total	\$ 219,634	\$ 218,397	\$ 234,290	\$ 15,893	
Client Support (SS05)					
Service Centre Client Support	\$ 12,068	\$ 11,246	\$ 12,195	\$ 949	9
Case Management Project	12,798	8,126	5,747	(2,379)	10
Subvote Total	\$ 24,866	\$ 19,372	\$ 17,942	(\$ 1,430)	
Housing (SS12)					
Program Delivery	\$ 5,791	\$ 7,627	\$ 6,342	(\$ 1,285)	11
Saskatchewan Housing Corporation	4,465	7,045	--	(7,045)	12
Subvote Total	\$ 10,256	\$ 14,672	\$ 6,342	(\$ 8,330)	
Total Expenditure	\$ 941,439	\$ 962,986	\$ 984,978	\$ 21,992	
Less: Capital Asset Acquisitions	(11,411)	(11,135)	(8,575)	2,560	13
Add: Non-Appropriated Expense Adjustment	4,394	4,693	4,185	(508)	14
Total Expense	\$ 935,011	\$ 956,544	\$ 980,588	\$ 24,044	

Explanation of Significant Variances:

1. Primarily relates to an increase in Valley View Centre transition capital construction costs and lease renewal pressures. Supplementary Estimates (additional funding) of \$500,000 was provided for the Valley View Centre transition capital project.
2. Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP) expenditures for the year were higher than budget due to a cost per case pressure compared to budget. A Supplementary Estimate of \$6.0 million was provided to SAP to manage the cost per case increase.
3. New clients previously not on assistance at a higher cost per case, as well as the transfer of clients from SAP, resulted in caseload and cost per case increases for the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program. There was a Supplementary Estimate added of \$10.45 million.
4. The under expenditure relates to the later implementation of programs, as some CBOs required additional time to plan, align resources, and meet requirements to develop new spaces and programs. Also, the Ministry deferred making some commitments as part of expenditure restraint measures.
5. The over expenditure is due to increased hiring for Valley View Centre transition and operating costs for the assessment and stabilization homes, as well as additional staffing for Income Assistance Service Delivery due to caseload pressures.
6. Forecast variance attributed to increased cost per case for foster care and extended family programs as a result of increased high cost placements and special needs costs, increased assisted adoption and family services costs and an increase in the cost per case for private treatment for children. A Supplementary Estimate of \$11.8 million was provided during the year.
7. Some CBOs required additional time to plan, align resources, and meet regulatory requirements to develop new spaces and programs. This includes additional spending decisions and deferral of capital transfers as per restraint measures.
8. The over expenditure is primarily due to divisional salary pressures, severance costs related to last year's facility closures and same job reclassification costs. This is partially offset by deferred training costs.
9. The over expenditure is a result of operating and support costs higher than budget for front line service delivery.
10. The Linkin Financials case management project has been extended to fall 2015, which has resulted in the majority of savings this year.
11. Staffing of vacant positions deferred as per restraint measures.
12. To meet financial restraint measures, the payment to Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) was eliminated.
13. Change is a result of later implementation of the Linkin project and work on the South Broad Plaza project which began later in the year than anticipated.
14. Savings in capital asset amortization due to less capital costs incurred for the Linkin project than estimated.

Third-party Funding

In 2014-15, the Ministry provided \$306.3 million in funding to third parties, the majority of which was provided to community-based organizations.

2014-15 Revenue Results

A summary of the Ministry's 2014-15 budgeted revenue compared to actual revenue is presented below with explanations for variances which are five per cent or greater over budget.

(in thousands of dollars)					Notes
Revenue by Source	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Budget	2014-15 Actual	Variance Over/ (Under)	
Sales, Services and Service Fees					
Management and Collection Services	\$ 4,812	\$ 4,710	\$ 4,710	\$ 0	
Miscellaneous Medical and Institutional Services	878	674	919	245	¹
Other Miscellaneous Services	2	2	1	(1)	
Miscellaneous Deductions from Staff Salaries	55	66	55	(11)	
Subtotal	\$ 5,747	\$ 5,452	\$ 5,685	\$ 233	
Transfers from the Federal Government					
Young Offenders Agreement	\$ 941	\$ 942	\$ 295	(647)	²
Special Allowance for Children in Care	16,203	16,400	16,948	548	³
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada	1,621	3,016	5,508	2,492	⁴
Subtotal	\$ 18,765	\$ 20,358	\$ 22,751	\$ 2,393	
Other Revenue					
Maintenance Order Revenues	\$ 712	\$ 625	\$ 696	\$ 71	
Casual Revenue	8	45	20	(25)	
Realized Gain or Loss	1	--	--	--	
Repayment - Public Assistance	3,091	1,500	3,195	1,695	⁵
Refunds of Previous Years' Expenses	385	500	1,050	550	⁶
Collection Agency Fees Withheld	(35)	--	(33)	(33)	
Subtotal	\$ 4,162	\$ 2,670	\$ 4,928	\$ 2,258	
Total Revenue	\$ 28,674	\$ 28,480	\$ 33,364	\$ 4,884	

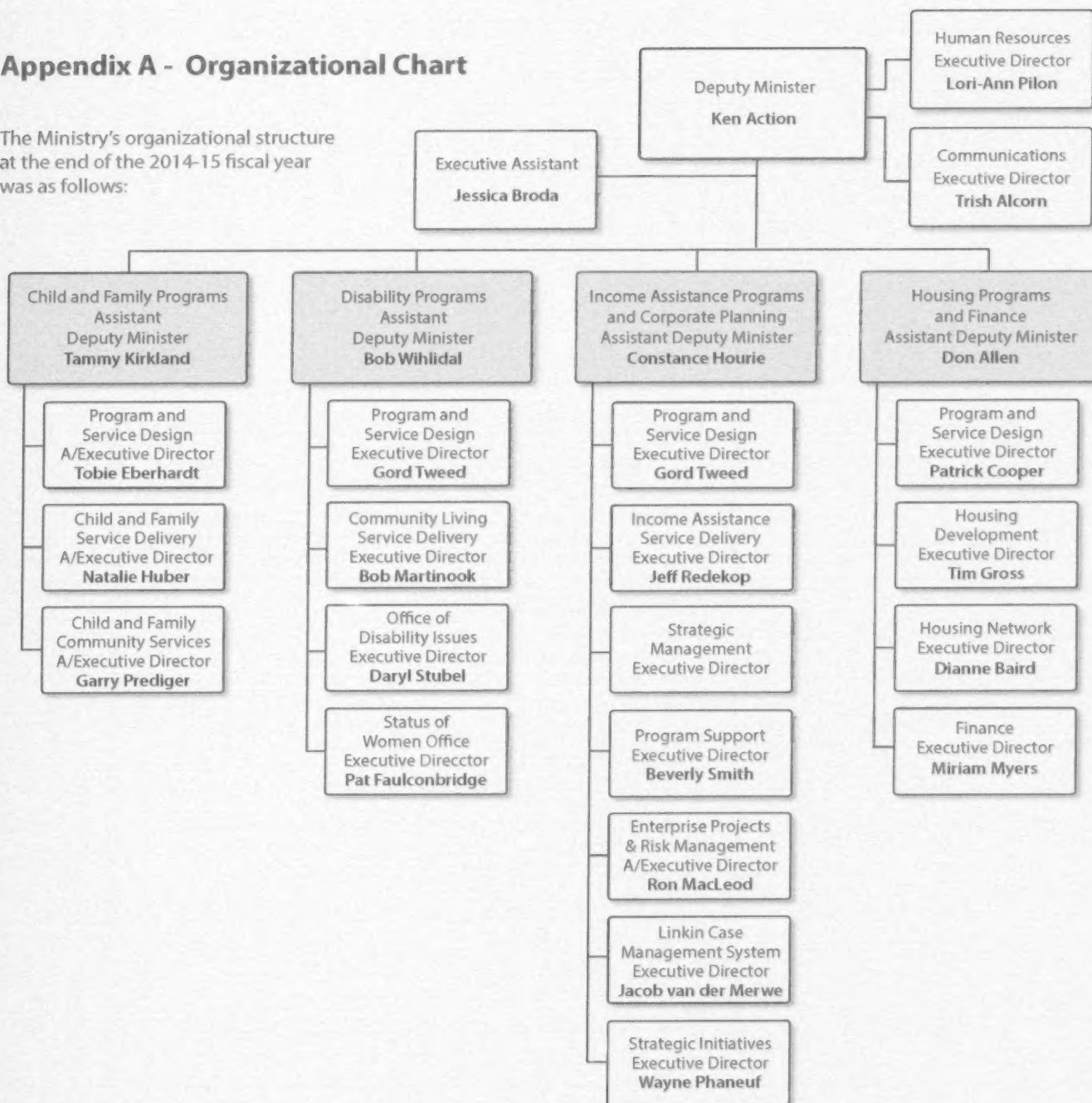
Explanation of Significant Variances:

1. The number of Valley View Centre residents who are receiving OAS/GIS and are charged monthly fees was higher than budgeted.
2. Revenue recorded in the year relates to actual receipts received. The timing of receipts for this revenue source is based on submissions by the Ministry of Justice to the federal government.
3. An increase in revenue from the Children's Special Allowance as a result of more children in care during the year than budgeted.
4. Some 2013-14 AANDC revenue was received and recognized in 2014-15.
5. Repayments from clients were higher than anticipated in the budget.
6. Refunds related to last year were higher than anticipated in the budget.

Appendices

Appendix A - Organizational Chart

The Ministry's organizational structure at the end of the 2014-15 fiscal year was as follows:



Appendix B - Our Work with Our Federal Housing Partner CMHC

Target Housing Programs and Services to Those in Need

Improving Housing Affordability

Affordability is related to the availability of housing across the housing continuum. Programs that increase the supply of housing targeted to low-to-moderate-income earners provide opportunities for households that might not otherwise be able to afford housing.

On August 26, 2014, SHC signed a new five-year, cost-sharing agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The Investment in Affordable Housing 2014-19 (IAH Agreement) will see a combined investment of \$91.9 million over the next five years. The overall outcome of this investment is to reduce the number of households in housing need by improving access to affordable housing that is sound, suitable and sustainable. Other intended outcomes include:

- reduce the demands for services and institutional living by increasing and extending independent living for households in need;
- increase the resources available to address the housing needs of households in need by encouraging contributions by others, including private and not-for-profit organizations;
- prevent the loss of affordable housing stock;
- foster training of skilled labour by supporting apprenticeships in the residential housing sector; and
- foster safe independent living through the support of new construction or renovating existing accommodation to benefit, for example, low-to-moderate income households and victims of family violence.

Two Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for the hard-to-house in southern Saskatchewan and low-income households in northern Saskatchewan were conducted for the Rental Development Program, as well as two RFPs for low-income households in all communities under the Capital Rent Subsidy program. By March 31, 2015, these activities led to projects being approved, or prioritized for future approval, for over \$20 million in 15 communities across Saskatchewan.

In the first year of the Extension, a total of 453 households² are no longer in housing need as a result of the Investment in Affordable Housing. Outcomes achieved include 232 households are no longer living in inadequate conditions, 10 seniors and three persons with disabilities are able to remain living independently, six victims of family violence were able to leave violent situations, and the supply of affordable housing was increased by 202 units.

CMHC and SHC foster the training of skilled labour by supporting apprenticeships in the residential housing sector. All projects that were prioritized for funding through the 2014 spring and fall Request for Proposals (RFPs) committed to employing apprentices on the job site. In the first year, three IAH funded projects employed apprentices and 25 more committed to increasing awareness and promoting apprenticeship training during construction.

Since 2011, total funding of just over \$47 million resulted in a total of 1,657 households being assisted in addressing their housing need. Outcomes achieved through the IAH Agreement include 991 households are no longer living in inadequate conditions, 60 seniors and 23 persons with disabilities were able to remain living independently, 14 households were able to leave violent situations, and there was an additional 569 affordable housing units added, increasing supply in the province. There was also \$340,235 additional dollars generated through local partnerships to address housing needs in Saskatchewan.

2. To reflect results achieved, outcome numbers are based on unit completions. Due to the nature of construction and development time lags, numbers may differ from previous reports that were based on commitments.

Appendix C – Ministry of Social Services Legislation

- *The Adoption Act, 1998 / Loi de 1998 sur l'adoption*
- *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*
- *The Child and Family Services Act*³
- *The Child Care Act*⁴
- *The Child Care Act, 2013 / Loi de 2013 sur les garderies d'enfants*²
- *The Donation of Food Act, 1995*
- *The Emergency Protection for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Act*
- *The Human Resources, Labour and Employment Act*⁵
- *The Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) Implementation Act*
- *The Rehabilitation Act*
- *The Residential Services Act*⁶
- *The Saskatchewan Assistance Act*
- *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act*
- *The Saskatchewan Income Plan Act*
- *The Social Services Administration Act*⁷
- *The Social Workers Act*
- *The Women's Affairs Act*

3. Except section 5 which is jointly assigned to the Ministers of Education and Social Services

4. Jointly assigned to the Ministers of Education and Social Services

5. Only with respect to section 4.03

6. Jointly assigned to the Ministers of Social Services, Health, Justice and Attorney-General, and Corrections and Policing

7. Sections 6, 7, 11-15 and 18, jointly assigned to the Ministers of Social Services, Justice and Attorney-General, and Corrections and Policing; section 8 jointly assigned to the Ministers of Social Services and Education

For More Information

Please visit <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/ministries/social-services> for more information on the Ministry of Social Services' programs and services or call our Communications Branch at 306-787-3686.

